

Florence-Firestone Vision Plan Summary Notes

Community Workshop #2 – Visioning
February 21, 2009, Roosevelt Park Senior Center

On Saturday February 21, 2009, members of the Florence-Firestone community met for the second of three public community workshops to develop the Florence-Firestone Vision Plan. The purpose of this second workshop was to identify areas for potential land use changes in the community and to prioritize a series of actions that would enhance “community identity.” Over 80 members of the public attended the workshop.

Beginning Exercises

As with the first workshop for the Florence Firestone Vision Plan, the workshop began with the participants answering a series of questions about their community. The following summarizes the participant’s responses:

1) Where do you live? – Community members put a sticker on a map of the community showing the location of their home. A relatively small number of people identified their homes on the map. Of those that did, there was generally equal representation from throughout the community.

2) Magic Genie – Participants were granted three wishes to improve their community. They wrote their ideas on post-it notes and placed them on a map of the community. The ideas presented included the following:

- Improve public safety with more police, block clubs and other activities
- Enhance neighborhoods with senior housing and shopping centers
- Attract quality businesses to the community
- Improve alleys throughout the community
- Address gangs and violence
- Stop graffiti
- Improve the parks
- Improve Alameda Street – make it more beautiful
- Improve Compton Avenue – make it more beautiful
- Add landscaping, trees and flowers to all the streets
- Get dogs off of the streets
- Bring more jobs to the community

Presentation

Following these exercises there was a welcome by Pat Hachiya from the Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning and then a presentation by Matt Raimi of Raimi + Associates, Inc., the lead consultant on the project. The presentation provided a summary of the purpose of the project, a discussion of the key issues in the community and a summary of the results of workshop # 1, which occurred on January 10, 2009.

The presentation also included an introduction to two interactive exercises, which followed the presentation. The first exercise was on community design and potential land use changes for the Florence-Firestone community and the second was the “community identity” exercise. Following the presentation, the community divided into five groups to develop a vision for the future of the community. The results of the two interactive exercises are presented below.

Community Design/Land Use Interactive Exercise

For this exercise, six areas of the community were identified as areas where possible land use changes could occur and for each area three alternative development patterns were presented. The six areas were: Florence Mile/Florence Blue Line Station; Neighborhoods, Alameda Corridor and adjacent industrial areas; the Firestone Blue Line Station; and the Slauson Blue Line Station. The potential alternative development patterns were divided into the following three categories. These categories progress from that ranged from the least difficult and least change to the most difficult and the most change, as follows:

- Maintain – the existing land uses and character are maintained.
- Evolve and Enhance – the land use pattern is changed over time to include complimentary land uses.
- Transform – the area is changed rapidly with new land uses. This is the most difficult of the alternatives and would result in the most dramatic change to the area.

Descriptions and images for each alternative presented for each geographic area can be found attached to this summary.

The objective of the exercise was for the participants to identify a general direction for each area. The results of each group are discussed below.

Group 1

Florence Firestone/Florence Blue Line Station – Transform the area by adding more retail with parking in front of the building; increase parking in the areas, make the sidewalks more walkable; and improve security.

Neighborhoods – Enhance the existing neighborhoods by doing the following:

- Adding stop signs

- Stopping people from selling cars on the street
- Adding more landscaping
- Cleaning the streets
- Educating the community on public services that residents can take advantage of
- Create a home improvement program
- Clean the alleys
- Fix pot holes in the streets
- Increase police presence
- Increase the size of existing community centers
- Add senior and affordable housing

Alameda Corridor and Industrial – Transform the area by redeveloping some or all of the Alameda corridor and industrial areas with big box retail and office-related jobs; improve the corridor with landscaping; and create buffers between the industrial uses and the residential uses.

Corridors (Firestone, Florence, Compton, Central, and Gage) – Enhance the existing corridors by adding 2-3 story mixed use buildings. The area should have a walkable “main street” character similar to Florence Mile. Improve the streetscape with landscaped medians, traffic signals crosswalks and other improvements.

Firestone Station – Enhance the area by adding 2-3 story mixed use buildings with retail on the ground floor. Improve parking and address safety concerns with increased police patrols.

Slauson Station – Enhance the existing area by attracting more light industrial/flex uses to the area. Improve safety and increase parking at the rail station.

Group 2

Florence Firestone/Florence Blue Line Station – Evolve and enhance Florence Mile by adding some mixed use development while retaining and enhancing the existing “main street” character of the area.

Neighborhoods – Enhance the existing neighborhoods by planting trees and also consider allowing some new larger developments with small lot single-family and small-scale apartments.

Alameda Corridor and Industrial – Enhance the existing environment by attracting new businesses that are more attractive and cleaning up existing businesses. Many of the existing businesses should be retained because they provide jobs for the community.

Corridors (Firestone, Florence, Compton, Central, and Gage) – Enhance the existing area by adding 1 to 2 story buildings with retail and residential. Many of the existing businesses should be retained because they provide jobs for the community.

Firestone Station – Enhance the existing area by improving the existing businesses and adding new businesses and restaurants. Higher density, mixed use development in this area is not desired.

Slauson Station – Transform the area into a mixed use, residential transit village.

Group 3

Florence Firestone/Florence Blue Line Station – Evolve and enhance Florence Mile and keep it as the heart of the community.

Neighborhoods – Evolve and enhance existing neighborhoods by adding landscaping to the streets (trees) and making the community more affordable. Consider finding locations where new, attractive townhomes can be added to the neighborhoods.

Alameda Corridor and Industrial – Evolve and enhance the area by improving the visual appearance but also find locations to add a large supermarket and other larger stores that may benefit the community.

Corridors (Firestone, Florence, Compton, Central, and Gage) – Evolve and enhance the corridors with more attractive, community-serving retail. Allow some small-scale mixed use development of 2-3 stories.

Firestone Station – Evolve and enhance with Firestone station area with better retail. Improve safety in and around the station.

Slauson Station – (no response)

Group 4

Florence Firestone/Florence Blue Line Station – Maintain the existing “main street” character with primarily 1 and 2 story retail and some mixed use development. Do not allow any more strip-commercial development. Enhance the area with the following:

- Better lighting in and around the Florence Blue Line station.
- Improve the visual appearance of the area with façade improvements to existing buildings.
- Allow mixed use development of 3-5 stories in limited areas; ground floor retail and character should contribute to the existing main street character.
- Add more retail and more variety of retail to Florence Mile.
- Add more sit-down restaurants and less fast food.

Neighborhoods – Maintain and strengthen the predominantly single-family character of the neighborhoods but evolve and enhance with the following:

- Add more street lighting
- Add some attractive and high-quality attached single-family and multi-family housing
- Address issues with LAUSD schools in the neighborhoods
- Resolve the conflicts between industrial and residential uses

Alameda Corridor and Industrial – Evolve and enhance the existing industrial character of the area with visual improvements and adding new light industrial/flex uses. The group did not want to maintain the existing visual character of the area. New retail and office uses were not desired.

Corridors (Firestone, Florence, Compton, Central, and Gage) – Evolve and enhance the existing character of the corridors with new, attractive retail uses and with some 3-5 story mixed use, residential development. The new residential should be targeted to senior housing and special-needs housing. The group did not want to see the existing character maintained.

Firestone Station – Evolve and enhance the area with new retail uses and, if possible, some vertical mixed use development. There was a concern raised that adding new residential would increase the likelihood of attracting gangs.

Slauson Station – Evolve and transform the area to include higher-density job uses as well as a mixed use residential transit village. Do not maintain the existing character of the area.

Group 5

Florence Firestone/Florence Blue Line Station – Evolve and enhance the area with the following:

- Encourage a wider variety of stores and higher quality stores
- Remodel existing buildings to make them more attractive.
- Expand the library to be larger; the existing library is small for a community the size of Florence-Firestone.
- Increase police presence around the Florence Blue Line station; MTA should provide more police presence
- Improve the visual appearance on the west side of the Florence Station
- Build a police sub-station on Florence Mile
- Continually improve the parks in the area
- Improve safety on Florence Mile with more police presence and a safer walking environment

Neighborhoods – Evolve and enhance the existing areas with the following:

- Address parking problems by adding parking in the residential areas

- Address overcrowding of the area.
- Increase transit access in the residential areas by increasing transit service on North/South roadways Central, Hooper and Compton and on East/West roadways such as Gage, Nadeau, 92nd and Firestone.
- Improve the existing parks with new recreational facilities such as basketball courts in Roosevelt Park.
- Increase security in the parks so people use them more.
- Improve community leadership, especially training for youth.
- Increase code enforcement activities in and around the residential areas, especially the industrial areas that are adjacent to residential areas.
- Add more high-quality housing to the neighborhoods, such as small-lot single family, townhomes and small-scale (2-3 story) multifamily residential.
- New residential should be higher-density affordable housing and senior housing.

Alameda Corridor and Industrial – Evolve and enhance the Alameda Corridor and nearby industrial areas to retain some of the existing uses while also adding some light industrial flex uses as well as some larger retail stores such as a home improvement store. Some specific ideas mentioned were:

- Reduce the amount of outdoor industrial uses and putting activities “within buildings.”
- Find opportunities to add community gardens in the area.
- Change the visual appearance of the existing industrial uses, particularly the fencing around the uses. The fencing should help to create an attractive street frontage, particularly across from residential areas.
- Consider adding murals in the area

Corridors (Firestone, Florence, Compton, Central, and Gage) – Evolve and enhance the corridors by improving existing buildings and adding new 1-2 story retail and office uses. Other ideas included the following:

- Color coordinate buildings
- Redevelop vacant and underutilized properties
- Increase code enforcement
- Improve the fencing on storage facilities to be more attractive
- Improve parking on the corridor
- Remodel existing buildings
- Add landscaping to the corridors
- Add “welcome” signs in key locations, such as at Firestone and Central

Firestone Station – Evolve and enhance the Firestone station area with a wider diversity of retail and commercial uses. Improve the visual appearance of the area by cleaning the streets, improving lighting, improving building facades and adding landscaping.

Slauson Station – Add new mixed use retail/office and light industrial/flex uses around the Slauson Blue Line Station while retaining some of the existing industrial uses.

Community Identity Interactive Exercise

The presentation also introduced the “community identity” portion of the workshop. The purpose of this exercise was for participants to prioritize a list of 45 potential actions that would help to improve the character and identity of the community. The specific actions were the result of suggestions from the public at the first Florence-Firestone Vision Plan workshop, discussions with stakeholders, and recommendations from County staff. The possible actions were divided into 5 topic areas: Community Safety; Alleys; Community Beautification; Administrative Activities; and Open Space. Within each topic area, the actions were then divided into three levels of difficulty of completing the action: Least Difficult; Medium Difficulty; and Most Difficult.

During the small group exercise, participants discussed the advantages and disadvantages of each possible action and then individually voted on the actions that they believed would have the most positive impact on the community. Each participant was given 4 votes for the Least Difficult category, 3 votes for the Medium Difficulty category and 2 votes for the Most Difficult Category.

A complete list of all the actions and the results of voting exercise is attached to this summary. The actions with the most votes for each level of difficulty are presented below:

Least Difficult (top 8 of 13 actions)

- Neighborhood Watch Groups (45 votes)
- Alley Improvement Handbook (19 votes)
- Tree maintenance (19 votes)
- “Welcome” signs at major entryways (18 votes)
- Neighborhood cleanup days (16 votes)
- Neighborhood alley cleanup events (15 votes)
- Banner signs on major roadways (14 votes)
- Name the alleys (14 votes)

Medium Difficulty (top 8 of 21 actions)

- Increased County cleanup of alleys (47 votes)
- Improve street lighting (22 votes)
- Increased code enforcement in alleys (22 votes)
- Increased code enforcement in neighborhoods and along corridors (17 votes)
- Improved traffic safety for pedestrians, including traffic calming (16 votes)
- Community gardens on vacant lots (15 votes)
- Change the name of the community (13 votes)
- Tot lots (playgrounds) on vacant parcels (12 votes)

Most Difficult (top 6 of 11 actions)

- Privatize the alleys (35 votes)
- Create a Redevelopment Agency for Florence-Firestone (23 votes)
- Community-wide streetscape improvement program (16 votes)
- Police station in Florence-Firestone (15 votes)
- Community gardens in alleys (11 votes)
- Linear park along utility lines (9 votes)

Next Steps

There will be one more workshop held to help create the Florence-Firestone Vision Plan. The workshop will be held on March 28th, 2009. Each member of the community is encouraged to spread the word about the workshop and to bring at least 5 other people to the workshop.